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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

8 December 1965

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Communist Options in the Rhodesian Crisis

1. There are roughly three options available to the Soviets: (1) they can sit tight and generate pressure for British or UN intervention; (2) they can try to promote a request for their own intervention with Soviet forces; or (3) they can encourage the Africans to use force and promise material assistance. The first course is politically unprofitable, and the second too risky. The Soviets have clearly chosen this last option, and we think that Moscow is prepared to underwrite an African force.

2. Nevertheless, as one bloc diplomat remarked, the Communists cannot be more African than the Africans. How far the Soviets become involved is largely up to the Africans. Moscow would probably back any military operation with logistics, training and advice, but would avoid any firm commitments as to their own direct action. The Soviets may even be a sobering voice, in view of the difficulties in mounting actual ground or air operations against Southern Rhodesia. In short, the Soviets will follow the Congo pattern, encouraging and supporting the radical Africans but not committing their own forces.

3. As for the Chinese, they are not yet a real factor. They will make the proper noises and offers of aid, but there is not much they can do. As in the Congo, however, over the longer term the Chinese might become more effective in helping the development of an indigenous "liberation" force.

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GROUP 1
Excluded from automatic
downgrading and
declassification